

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SOFIA 00124 201533Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-10 ISO-00 CU-04 SSO-00 NSCE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 MCT-01
A-01 OC-06 CCO-00 HA-05 OMB-01 OPR-02 USSS-00
FBOE-00 SYE-00 /093 W
-----081423 201549Z/44

O R 201408Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4037

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMCONSUL MUNICH
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY SANA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USIA WASHDC
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PROP, PEPR, BU, US, XN, XF
SUBJECT: THREATENED ARAB STUDENT ACTION AGAINST EMBASSY

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REF: SOFIA 0096

1. BULGARIAN POLICE CORDON CONTINUED TO BLOCK SIDEWALK IN
FRONT OF EMBASSY AS OF JANUARY 20, MANNED BY VARIOUSLY 1-TO-4
MILITIAMEN. NUMBER OF VISITORS TO EMBASSY HAS DROPPED AND
NO ONE
IS PERMITTED TO STOP AND LOOK AT DISPLAY WINDOWS.

2. ACTING DCM SIMPSON REQUESTED APPOINTMENT WITH
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROTOCOL SECURITY OFFICER
DAMYANOV JANUARY 20 TO REQUEST FURTHER INFORMATION ON
THREAT AND TO ASK REMOVAL OF BARRIERS, IF POSSIBLE.

3. DAMYANOV SAID BULGARIAN SECURITY SERVICE WAS INVESTIGATING MATTER BUT AS YET HAD TURNED UP NO CLEAR SPECIFIC INFORMATION REGARDING GROUP OR GROUPS POSING THREAT OR NATURE OF ACTION PLANNED. HOWEVER, MILITSIAMEN HAD INTERCEPTED TWO ARABS ATTEMPTING TO ENTER THE AREA JANUARY 19. ARABS HAD VERBALLY THREATENED ACTION AGAINST EMBASSY AND MILITSIAMEN GUARDING IT. (DAMYANOV SAID MILITSIA HAD NOT ARRESTED ARABS SINCE THEY LACKED ORDERS TO DO SO.) HE ALSO SAID THAT MILITSIA HAD REPORTED TO HIM THAT OCCASIONAL INDIVIDUALS AND VEHICLES SEEMED TO BE CASING EMBASSY. HE ADDED THAT, ON BASIS OF HIS FOUR YEARS' EXPERIENCE OF THESE MATTERS, HE NOW HAD IMPRESSION THAT PERHAPS SOME ROUGHER ACTION, LESS "SPONTANEOUS" THAN INITIALLY EXPECTED DEMONSTRATION, WAS PLANNED AGAINST US. HE REQUESTED EMBASSY TO COUNSEL ITS PERSONNEL TO BE "WARY" OF ANY UNUSUAL PERSONS AROUND AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE OR OTHER RESIDENCES AND TO BE QUICK TO INFORM EITHER MILITSIA OR MFA OF ANYTHING OF THAT SORT OUT OF THE ORDINARY.

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4. SIMPSON POINTED OUT THAT BARGCERUPSO PLACED MORE TIGHTLY CIRCUMSCRIBED EMBASSY ENTRANCE THAN HAD ORIGINALLY BEEN AGREED UPON. HMDAMYANOV SAID GOB DID NOT FEEL IT NECESSARY TO BLOCK OFF ENTRANCES TO NEIGHBORING BUILDINGS AT THIS TIME, SINCE ENTERPRISES IN THOSE BUILDINGS HAD QUOTAS TO FILL, ETC. HOWEVER, HE WOULD REYHEST MILITSIA TO REMOVE ROPES COMPLETELY BLOCKING -- EXCEPT FOR VERY NARROW GAP -- ENTRANCE TO EMBASSY, WHILE KEEPING PORTABLE BARRIER FENCE BARRING USE OF SIDEWALK.

5. SIMPSON STRESSED AGAIN EMBASSY'S PRESSING CONCERN THAT SITUATION BE RETURNED TO "BUSINESS AS USUAL" AS SOON AS THREAT TO ORDER WAS UNDER BULGARIAN CONTROL. ASKED HOW LONG HE THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE BULGARIAN POLICE TO GET TO BOTTOM OF MATTER, DAMYANOV RESPONDED THAT IN PAST SUCH CASES, PROBLEM HAD SOMETIMES DRAGGED ON FOR ONE-WEEK TO TWENTY-FIVE-DAY PERIOD. HE EXPRESSED REGRET BUT EMPHASIZED SEVERE EMBARRASMENT TO BULGARIA THAT ANY DAMAGE TO EMBASSY OR INJURY TO EMBASSY PERSONNEL WOULD CAUSE.

6. COMMENT: IT COULD STILL BE EITHER A REAL OR LATENT

THREAT, OR GOB HARRASSMENT, OR SOME COMBINATION. THERE ARE ARAB GROUPS HERE AND PAST INCIDENTS INDICATE THAT THEY ARE CAPABLE OF VIOLENCE. AT SAME TIME, BULGARIAN SECURITY HAS THESE GROUPS WELL WIRED AND GROUPS KNOW THEY WOULD BE DEALT WITH HARSHLY IF THEY GOT OUT OF LINE. NATURE OF THREAT, PARTICULARLY NEW ESCALATION REPRESENTED BY DAMYANOV SUGGESTION THAT TERRORIST ACT, RATHER THAN DEMONSTRATION, MAY BE INTENDED, AND POSSIBLY AT RESIDENCES RATHER THAN EMBASSY, MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR EMBASSY TO CALL GOB'S HAND BY REQUESTING REMOVAL OF CORDON. END COMMENT.

7. EMBASSY INTERNAL SECURITY PROCEDURES ARE TIGHT SD
EMBASSY PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN BRIEFED ON SITUATION BASED
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ON INFORMATION REFTEL AND ABOVE. IF NOTHING OCCURS, WE WILL SEEK FURTHER APPOINTMENT WITH MFA AFTER A LITTLE MORE TIME HAS PASSED TO KEEP PRESSURE ON GOB TO REMOVE BARRIERS, WITH FURTHER SUGGESTION THAT IT IS TIME BULGARIAN SECURITY GOT TO BOTTOM OF THREAT, IF THERE IS ONE.

GARTHOFF

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